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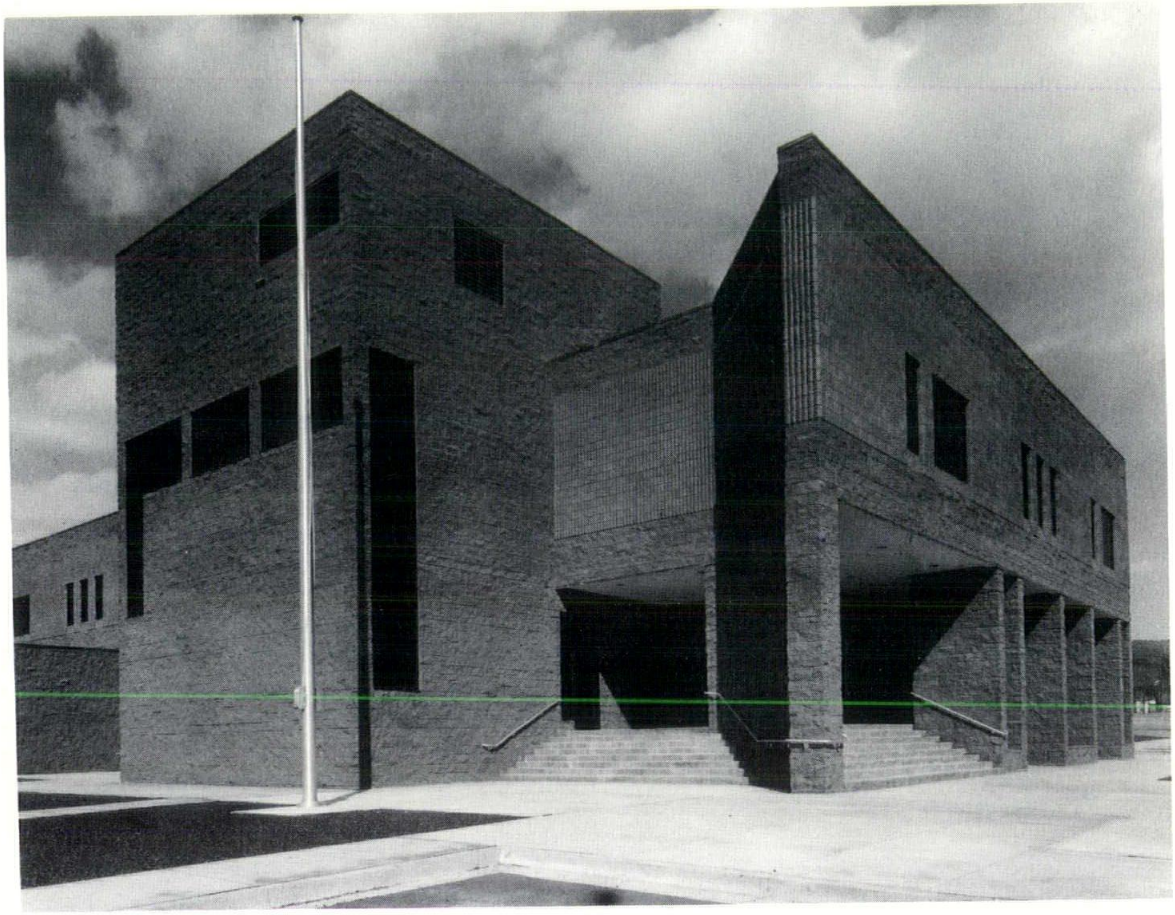

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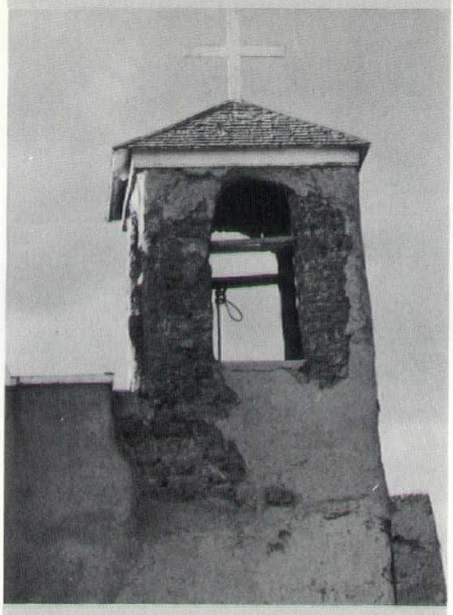

nma

vol. 19 no. 5

sept-oct 1977 • new mexico architecture

IN THIS ISSUE

are two important discussions concerning the subject of historic preservation. One treats adobe and its protection. Adobe is, perhaps, the most prevalent of New Mexico's building materials; it is, also, the most difficult to preserve against the ravages of the winds, rain and time. Originally mud plastered by Indian and Spanish builders, it has since been stuccoed, mixed with asphalt, sprayed with silicone and, most recently, coated with Pencapsula. But no miracle panacea exists; constant maintenance is necessary.

Beginning on page 11 Van Dorn Hooker, AIA, details the story of Saint Francis of Assisi Church in Ranchos de Taos. To stucco or not to stucco—that was the question!

James Marston Fitch, author, historian, teacher, has given us permission to publish a chapter from his forthcoming book, **The Past in the Future: Retrieval and Recycling of the Historical Environment**, which is being published by Oxford University Press. (See page 9.) Mr. Fitch is concerned with how we preservationists preserve and then present to the public historic buildings. This chapter, entitled "Cosmetic Aspects of Historic Preservation," was presented as one of the many scholarly papers at the Association For Preservation Technology conference last fall in Hamilton, Ontario. Space would not permit publication of the entire chapter in this issue. However, the final part concerning the "polychromatic consequences of structural intervention" will appear in the November/December issue of NMA.

James Marston Fitch, the former director of the Division of Historic Preservation, Graduate School of Architecture and Planning at Columbia University, is the author of **American Building; the Forces That Shape It** and **Architecture and the Aesthetics of Plenty.** **JPC**

NMA News **7**

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(Cover — St. Francis of Assisi — from a painting by Joseph Imof now in in the Maxwell Museum, UNM)

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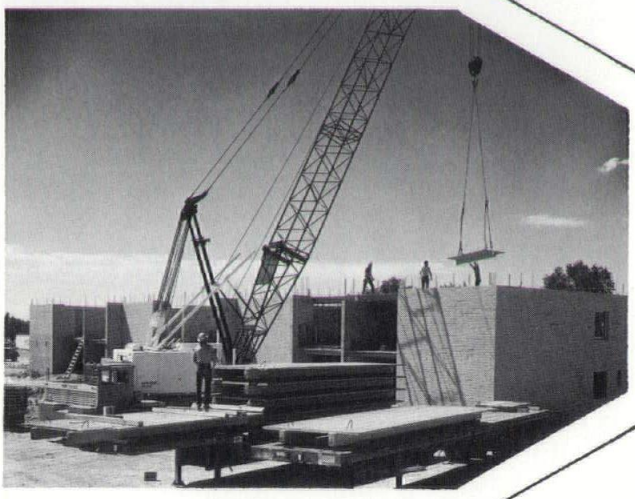

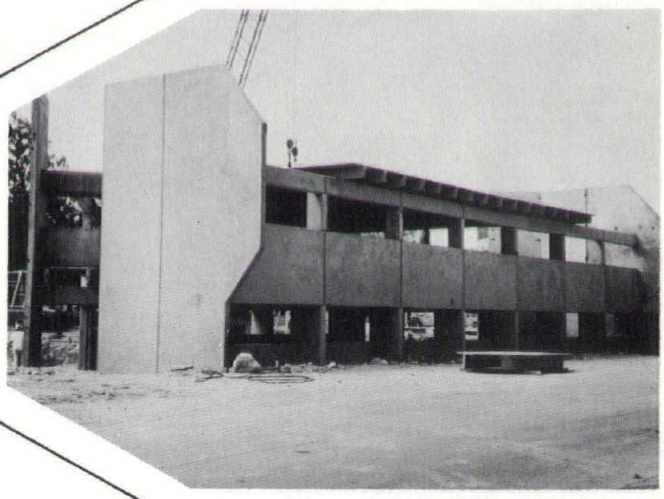

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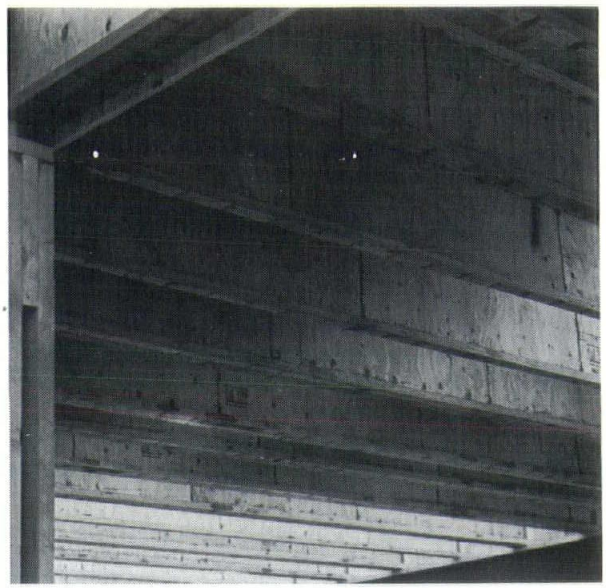

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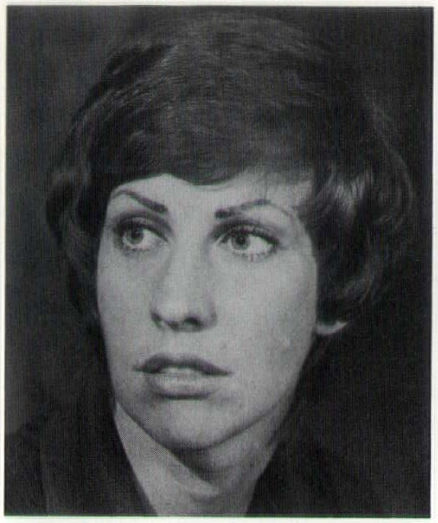
C. S. I. TO HOLD OPEN MEETING

The Construction Specifications Institute, C.S.I., is the one professional organization in which architects, engineers, contractors, manufacturers, suppliers and students work together for improvement in the construction industry. The Albuquerque Chapter of this national organization is holding an open meeting in October.

C.S.I. publishes numerous documents including the "Manual of Practice," a how-to-book for the preparation of specifications; over 130 "Specification Guides" ranging from termite control to telephones; and the new "Technical Aid Series," research information summaries on various building materials and components. Many of these documents will be on display at the open meeting.

Anyone involved in construction and wishing to learn more about C.S.I. is invited to attend a dinner meeting on October 11 at the Sheraton Old Town Inn in Albuquerque. Cost of the dinner is $7.00 with a social hour preceding from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. For further information or to make reservations, write: Ken Guthrie, 302 8th Street, N.W., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87102, or telephone: 247-0294.



PORTIA JENNINGS IS NMSA EXEC. SEC.

At its July meeting in Albuquerque, the Board of Directors of the New Mexico Society of Architects appointed Portia Jennings to the newly established post of Executive Secretary. The NMSA Executive Office is located at 3313 Girard, N.E., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87107. The new headquarters, under Ms. Jennings' direction, will be the central correspondence office for the Society. The AIA Form Service has been moved into the new headquarters. Please direct all your inquiries to Ms. Jennings at the Girard Boulevard address. The telephone number is (505) 345-5886.

ARCHITECTURE FOR FUN AND PROFIT

"Architecture for Fun and Profit", theme of the 1977 Convention of the New Mexico Society of Architects, is to be hosted October 14 and 15 at the Albuquerque Convention Center by the Albuquerque Chapter, American Institute of Architects. A seminar on "Project Feasibility Studies" will be conducted at the Convention Center on Friday, October 14, by architect/economist Thomas E. Selck of Pittsburgh, followed in the evening by a hosted cocktail party and the opening of the Honor Awards Exhibit and Art by Architects Show in the Galeria of nearby First Plaza.

The beautiful mass ascension of balloons concluding Albuquerque's celebrated Hot Air Balloon Festival will be the setting of Saturday morning's champagne breakfast and balloon rides. Society Luncheon and business meeting on Saturday will also hear the report of the architects/engineers laws study committee. Mini-seminars on brochure design, solar products, etc., will continue until 4:00 p.m., followed by the cocktail party hosted by the New Mexico Producers' Council. The Producers' Council display, which will be set

Continued on page 20

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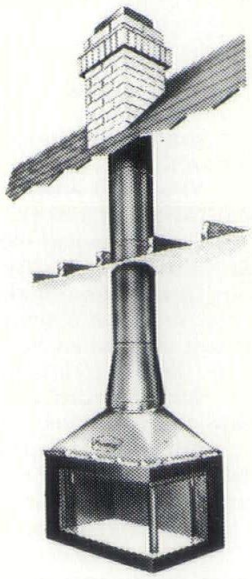

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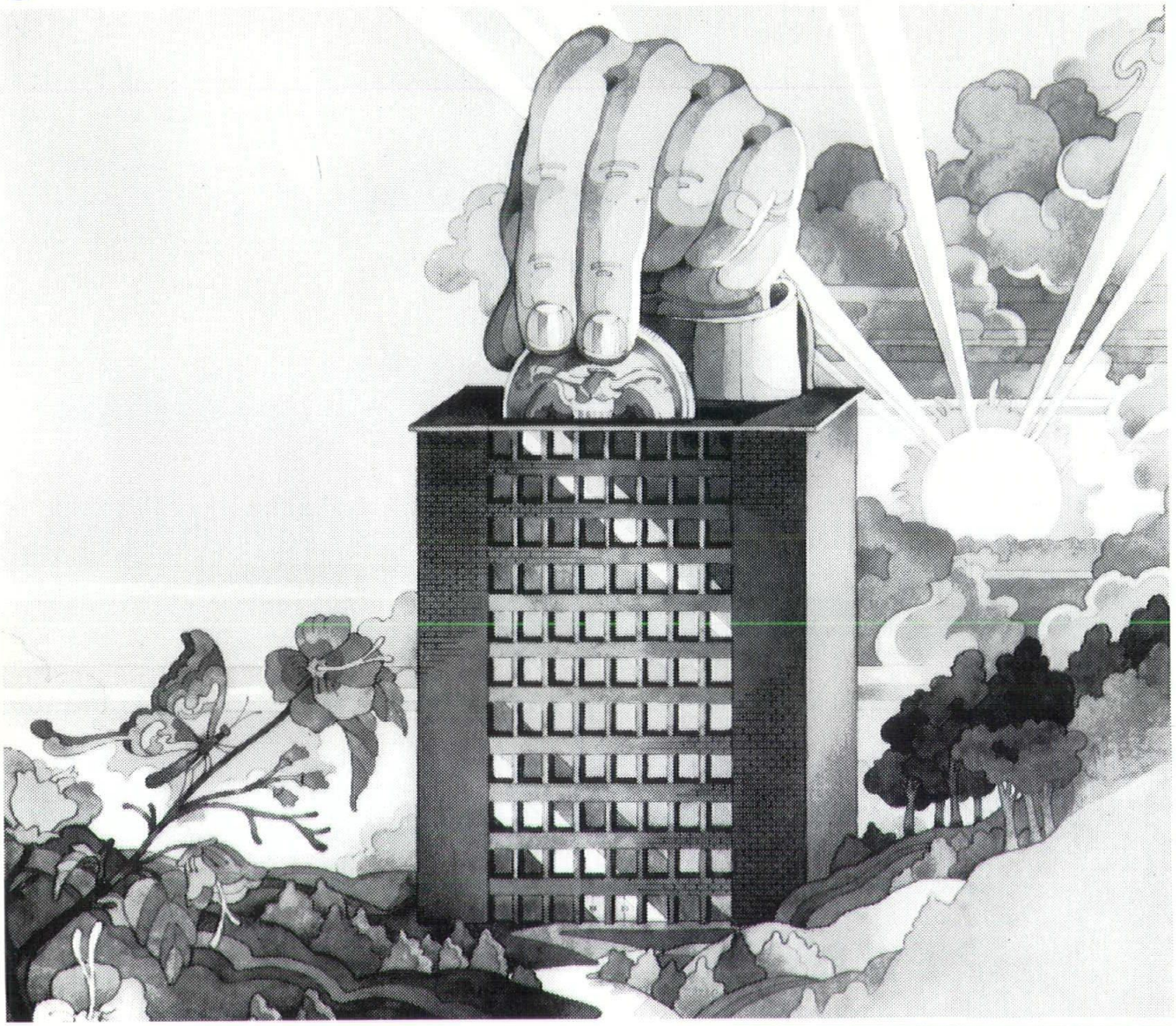

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Cosmetic Aspects of Historic Preservation

— by James Marston Fitch

Although it may indeed be only skin deep, the cosmetic condition of a building has a profound effect upon our reaction to and judgement of it. The visual information conveyed by its appearance forms an important part of our experience as a whole. (Sound, odors, temperature and touch are also important sensory inputs but many of them are subsumed by vision; and in any case, visual perception is overwhelmingly the most powerful. A blind person might be moved by the incense and sound of a high mass in Chartres but, lacking sight, his experience of it will be tragically reduced.) Thus it is vision which enables us to say of a building that it is dark and gloomy or bright and airy; to decide whether it is new or old, loved or neglected; ultimately, whether it is beautiful or ugly. But from information derived from visual scanning, we also fabricate another set of judgements as to its physical condition or structural stability. Such judgements are necessarily valid. The stained, cracked and spalling discolored stucco of Seventeenth Century buildings in Mexico might lead to a totally unwarranted conclusion of structural weakness while a new coat of white paint on a New England farm house might conceal evidence of imminent collapse. In short, the cosmetic appearance of architectural surfaces forms the basis for two quite different levels of response: associative and diagnostic.

Under such circumstances, the visual appearance of many old buildings in Central Europe might suggest structures weakened by decades of decay and neglect; yet that very building might have been carefully restored only a few years before. This is typically the case in cities like Prague or Cracow, where the burning of brown coal for heating produces smoke that quickly discolors stuccoed surfaces. For all its unhappy visual consequences, such processes might continue for decades without serious damage to the stucco. On the other hand, the same combination of gases would set into motion a complex chemico-physical process in marble and limestone which would lead to serious decay which would be concealed by a surface coat of grime. This is typically the case in many Gothic structures in northern Europe. While surface cleaning might be the first stage in therapy in both cases, for esthetic reasons in the first case and diagnostic in the latter, the removal of the surface crust on fine-scale limestone or marble sculpture might result in the loss forever of irreplaceable detail.

On the other hand, serious structural defects may display very few cosmetic consequences. Wooden beams may be riddled with termites or dry rot without any external evidence. The White House, whose outdoor and indoor surfaces had always been carefully maintained, turned out to be on the verge of actual collapse when its structure was carefully examined in 1948. Similarly, cracks in the walls of the cathedrals at Norwich and York Cathedrals were alarming only to specialists who, by their location and direction, could interpret them as warnings of grave structural weaknesses requiring immediate attention. (Subsequent work revealed that the rubble interiors of the masonry were riddled by voids caused by dessication and migration of the Norman cement: thousands of gallons of cement grout had to be injected into them to consolidate them.)

Entirely aside from the physical condition of the exposed surface (or of the structural member behind it), the philosophical aspects of its preservation are thorny and complex. These deserve far more attention than they have received up-to-date. One pivotal question takes this form: when our intervention (whether preservation, restoration, consolidation, reconstitution, etc.) is complete, should the building "look old" or "look new"? Should replaced elements be left to "weather naturally" or should they be "antiqued" to meld into the older tissue around them? There are competent experts on both sides of this argument. (Karol Estreicher has restored the Collegium Maius in Cracow so that all new material is antiqued to match the original. The curators of the Folk-museet in Copenhagen, when they must repair one of their old wooden farm houses, use new unpainted wood just as the peasant would have done).

The same problem is raised to even more critical levels in such activities as the cleaning of entire historic districts such as the Marais district of Paris, or the restoration of the polychromy in many English churches. The results of such interventions are often startling, compelling many people radically to re-adjust their ideas of how Paris "ought" to look (blue-gray, the way the Impressionists saw it) or Westminster "the way it always was" (i.e., before it was cleansed of centuries of soot, smoke and dust.)

While the individual, layman or expert, is entitled to his own preferences in such matters, the preservationist must develop broader, more objective and more comprehensive criteria for evaluating such decisions. Certain parameters can be established. For example, the preservationist should consider the following factors:

1. The esthetic ambitions of the original designers/owners of the artifact must be taken into account. Most monumental architecture is urbane and upper class, the expression of a life style which developed very precise standards of display, etiquette and propriety. They were implemented by very definite re-

Continued on page 17

A chapter from a forthcoming book, **The Past in the Future; Retrieval and Recycling of the Historical Environment,** by James Marston Fitch. The book, published by Oxford University Press, is due in the spring.

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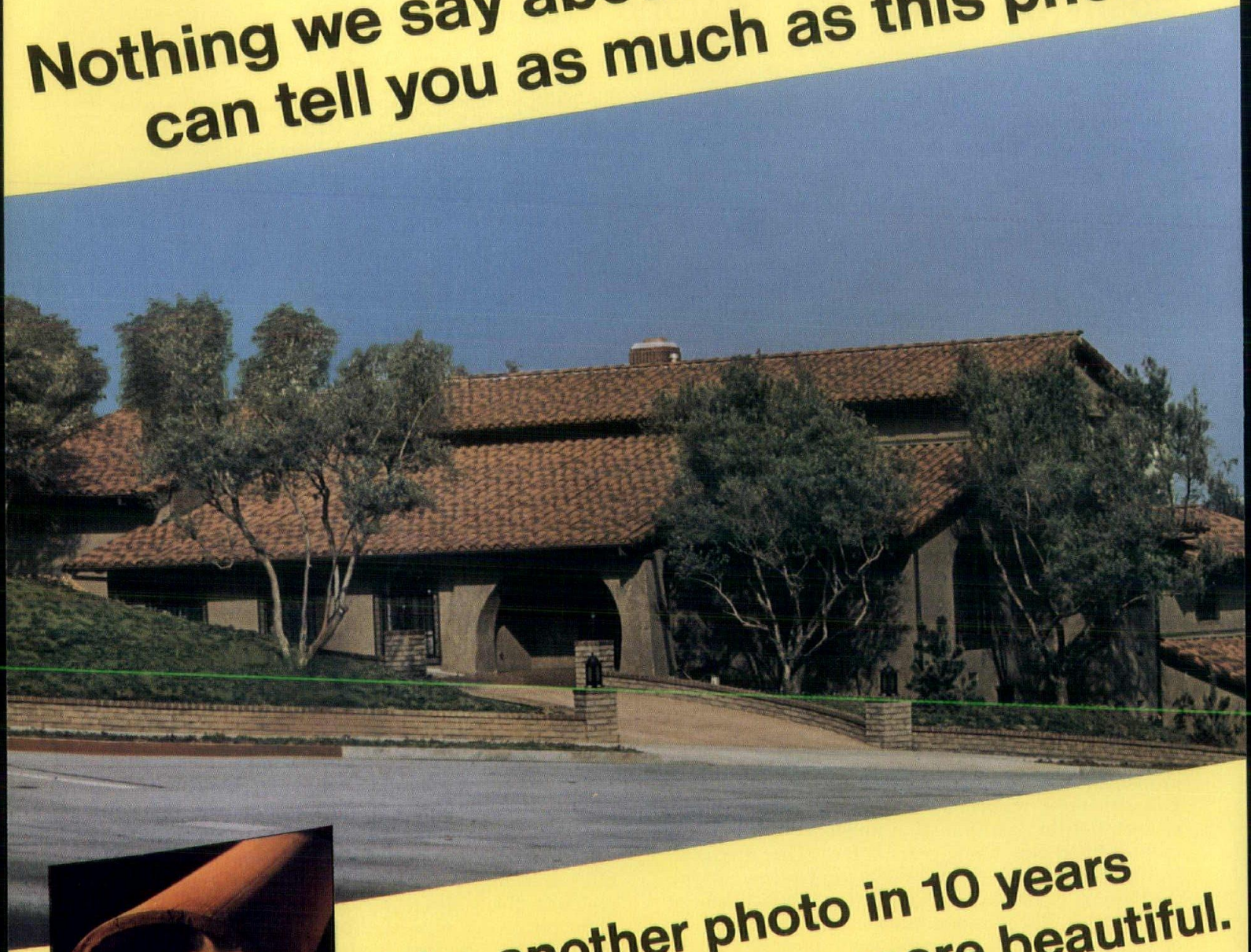

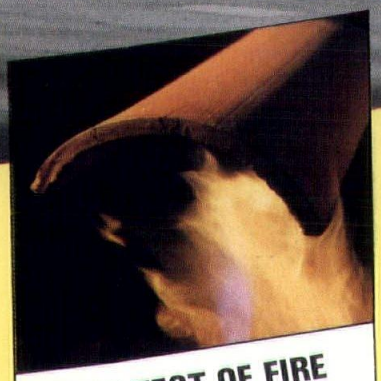

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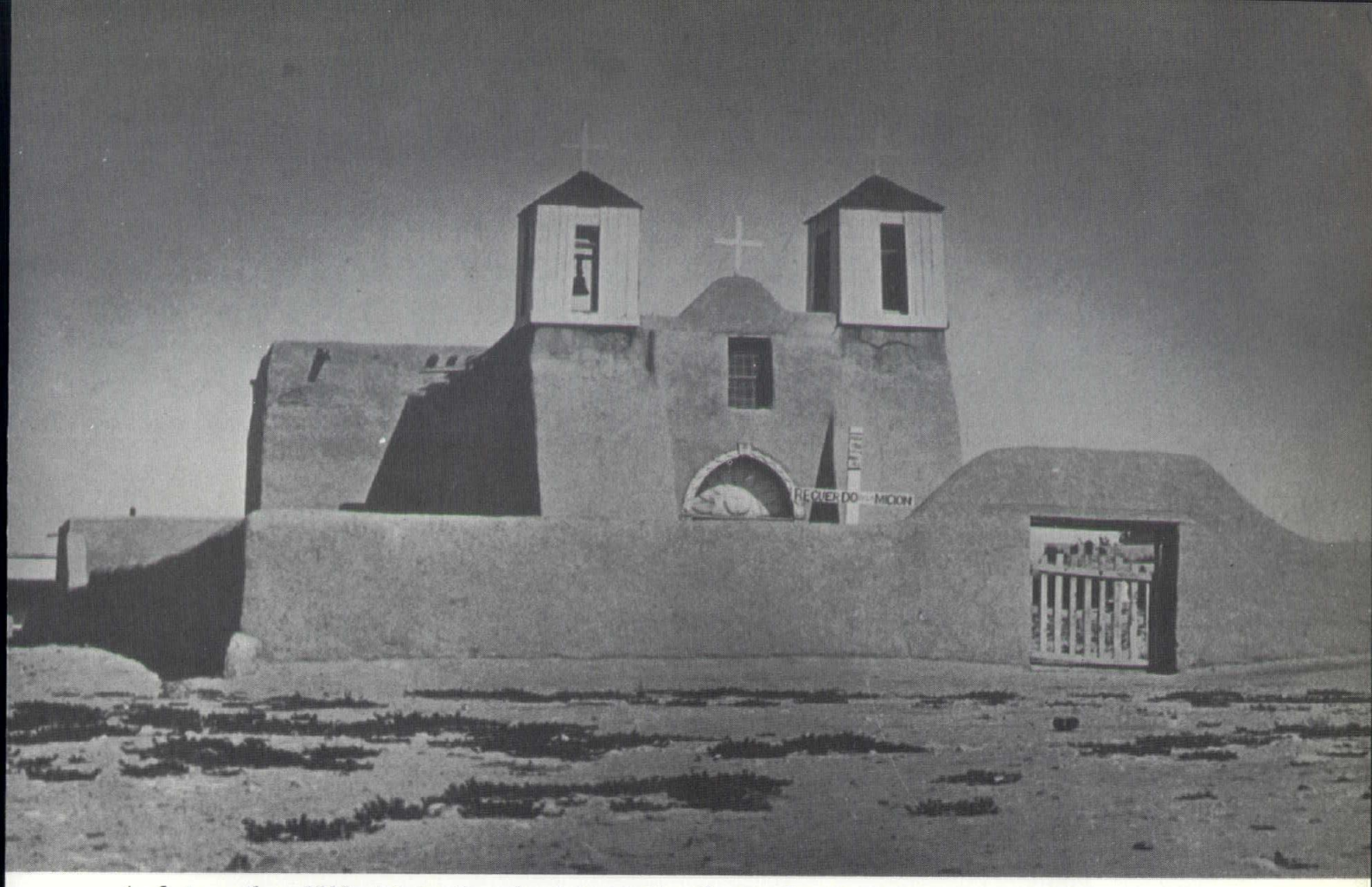


A photograph c. 1910 of Saint Francis of Assisi Church, Ranchos de Taos.

To Hand Plaster or Not ??

By Van Dorn Hooker, A.I.A.

There is no agreement among architectural historians as to when Saint Francis of Assisi Church at Ranchos de Taos was built. George Kubler states in "Religious Architecture of New Mexico" that there is no reliable evidence of date of construction. Tree ring studies indicated 1816 plus or minus 10 years. He quotes Stallings as saying circa 1780. Kubler says there was a settlement on the site in 1744 and the actual town was established in 1779.[1]

L. B. Prince in "Spanish Mission Churches of N. M." gives the date of construction as 1772.[2]

Bainbridge Bunting says the settlement, originally called Las Trampas de Taos, had 36 families numbering 160 persons in 1765. It was deserted during the 1770 Indian raids. In 1779, a wall was built around the village to protect it from the Comanches.[3]

In a pamphlet sold to visitors at the church, it is asserted that the plans for the church were drawn in Spain and that construction began in 1710 and lasted for 45 years.[4]

Laura Gilpin states in "The Rio Grande, River of Destiny" that the church was built in 1772. She also says that the walls are 5 feet thick and the buttresses are extra thick because it is so far north where there is more snow and greater danger of erosion.[5]

Kubler described the church as follows:

"Since the American occupation of the territory, the churches still in use have suffered great changes in the number, size and location of openings. The custom of remodelers has been to increase by 2 or 3 times the size of already existing openings, usually bringing their sills closer to the ground. Complementary openings are often pierced through the opposite nave wall. The openings have often been recut, in pointed neo-Gothic shapes as at Ranchos de Taos.

"The numerous heavy wall buttresses which surround the flanks of many of the churches undoubtedly answer certain structural needs. On the other hand, the number and size of the buttresses of Ranchos de Taos, for instance, soften and amplify the silhouette of the building. The function of the buttressing could be satisfied with less material in more commonplace shapes; actually, the buttressing seems to satisfy certain formal rather than structural needs.

"At Ranchos de Taos, the transepts constitute a separate church at right angles to the nave. The north

arm contains an altar in a kind of sanctuary formed with steps and other furniture. The south arm is deep enough to serve as a nave for this church within a church."[1]

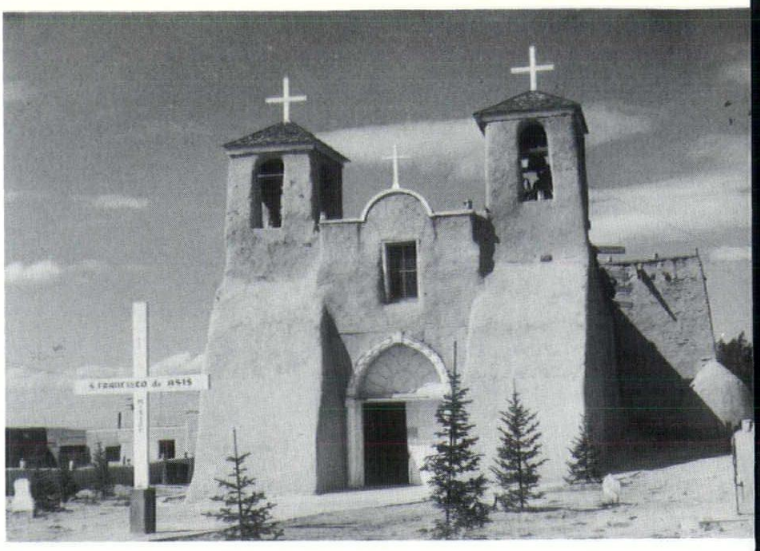
Kubler questions the irregularities of construction found in many churches, including Ranchos de Taos, such as the convergence of the nave walls toward the sanctuary, and the slope of roof in the same direction. The old wood floor sloped 7½" from entrance to sanctuary in the 78' length of the nave and the roof sloped 5". Was this intentionally done in order to create an optical illusion?[1]

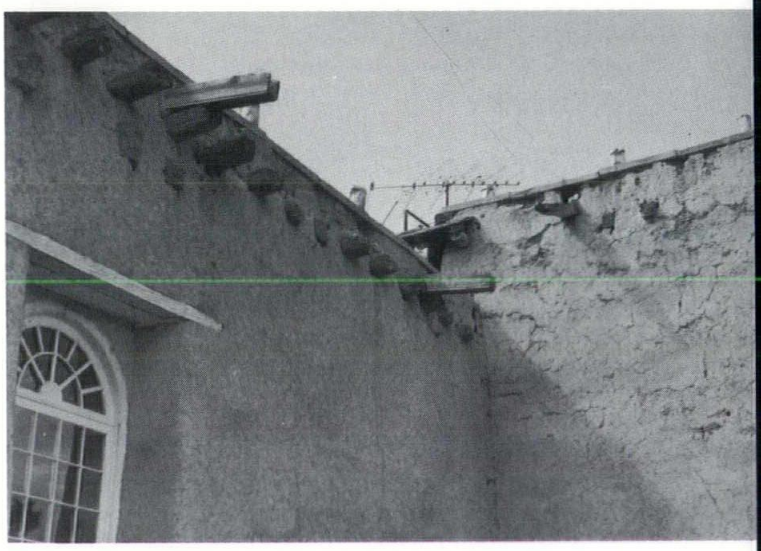
Earle R. Forrest wrote in 1929, *"The altar of French design is the only modern thing about the church, but the reredos has been unchanged by time. The furnishings include several old paintings on canvas and wood, the latter by native artists; and a large statue of Christ, very old, stands in the chancel."*[6]

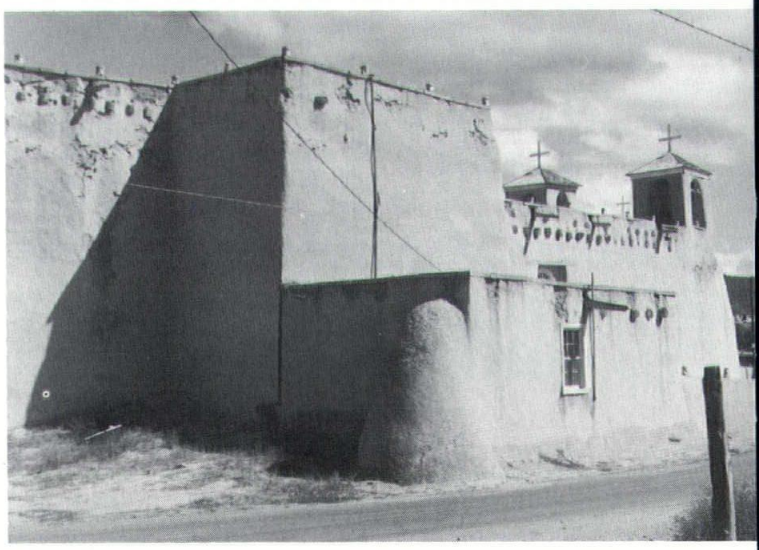
In the September-October issue, 1963 of NEW MEXICO ARCHITECTURE there was an article about the poor condition of the mud plaster on the exterior of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, or Assi, as you prefer. The article states that "the parishioners, faced with the perpetual maintenance problems inherent in adobe construction, have decided to protect the church with a coating of stucco." The article decries this decision and appeals to architects and readers to send money to the editor to pay for replastering with local mud. I presume there was no great outpouring of funds because I heard nothing about this until several years later.[7] *(No funds were received. Ed.)*

My involvement in the "hard plaster" case began in August 1966 when Msgr. Francis Reinberg, of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, called me and said that there was an "engineering" problem at Ranchos de Taos and asked me whom I would recommend to do the work. He said that it appeared there were some problems with the roof. I pointed out the historical significance of the church and suggested that an architect knowledgeable about preservation be employed to look into the problem. At his request, I named several firms that I thought would be competent. The Archdiocese chose George Wright and Associates of Albuquerque for the work.

On September 9, 1966, Msgr. Reinberg, George Wright and I went to Ranchos de Taos to examine the church. We met with Fr. Manuel Alvares, the pastor, and Gustaud Fernandez, the president of the Saint Francis of Assisi Parish Council. We found that indeed there was a problem with the roof but also the exterior walls were deteriorating badly. In the past, the parishioners had replastered the walls of the church with mud every two years, but this had stopped a few years previously. The plastering was time-consuming and since most of the men and many of the women worked, they did not wish to continue this procedure. In fact, it was stated that the church was too small, and maybe a new building should be considered. In any case, the church was desperately in need of repairs, so an inspection was made.







Saint Francis of Assisi in September, 1966 showing the need for repairs and protection.

John Gianardi, a contractor from Santa Fe, had been employed to reroof the church. When he removed the existing roofing, which was in very poor condition, he found that there was as much as 8 inches of dirt in some places on top of the roof deck. Upon removing some of the dirt, he found that about one half the thickness of the deck boards was rotten and some of the vigas were disintegrated to one half the original thickness. Where the vigas went through the walls, less than half the timber remained.

Wright ordered shoring to be placed under the first five vegas in the nave adjacent to the transept, to prevent collapse of the roof, the removal of the dirt on the roof and the examination of all vigas in the church.[8]

During the inspection of the interior of the church, I noted some very interesting decorative woodwork on the right wall of the transept. It was almost entirely covered by wood panelling. On the left side were some confessionals which did not appear to be too old. I asked if there had not been painted woodwork on both sides of the church and was told that in the late nineteen thirties when the confessionals were built, the painted woodwork had been removed and thrown away. What remained of the early woodwork has been uncovered, cleaned, and can now be seen on the right side of the transept.

After a brief inspection of the church, it was decided that George Wright should prepare a report on the condition of the building and recommend the necessary steps to be taken to repair the building.

A few days later, the report was presented to the Archbishop with four basic proposals concerning the future of the church: 1. Abandon the church, do nothing to maintain it. 2. Partially restore the church and get by with piecemeal repairs. 3. Turn the building over to the National Park Service for designation as a national monument, or 4. Start a full-fledged program of restoration and maintenance.

The report contained specific recommendations if the fourth proposal was accepted, such as: replacing badly rotted vigas and roof deck; removing earth fill on the roof and replacing it with lightweight insulation and improving the roof drainage pattern; either stuccoing the exterior or treating mud plaster with a chemical weather-proofing agent; rebuilding the bell towers; recessing all exposed electrical wiring into the walls; protecting the buttresses at the back of the sacristy; replacing the confessionals; and the installation of a new heating system.[9]

It was decided to begin the program of restoration and maintenance; John Gianardi, who was rebuilding the roof, was employed to do the rest of the work.

It was quite apparent that all the vigas would have to be replaced. Since it was quite late in the year, there weren't vigas of the diameter and length required to be had on the local market, nor could they be cut and hauled out of the forests. Gianardi found some logs which had been cut for utility poles at a mill near Eagle Nest which would meet the specifications, but they had already been creosoted. It was imperative to finish the roof before the winter set in, so the creosoted timbers were purchased and installed. Some of the corbels also were replaced.

In a report made on January 29, 1967, Kent Stout, as associate of George Wright, noted that upon entering the church, there was a strong odor of creosote. The odor persisted for a long time and several recommendations were made to counteract it, none of which were done. Eventually it disappeared and is not now noticeable.

On February 2, 1967, the TAOS NEWS ran a masthead story with the headline: "Church Restoration Stirs Passions" and a sub-heading: "Controversy Swarms Over Hardplastering." The article by Leslie Bottorff said the decision to "hard plaster" had "drawn fire from E. Boyd, curator of the Spanish Colonial Society." She said that hard plastering was no more permanent than mud plaster, citing a wall at the Palace of Governors which did not last a year after hard plastering before collapsing.

The article quoted Fr. Alvarez on the work to be done to the church. He said that the church would be left as it is except for the "hard-plastering" of the exterior.

The article quoted J. A. Maes, a member of the parish, as saying that the parishioners agreed with Fr. Alvarez. He said, "In the good old days, people

Some of the vigas *were disintegrated to one half their original thickness.*

were more willing to work together and do the plastering. Today, it is hard to get people to do it. We don't want to be selfish, but we do have a problem."

Maes pointed out that when the building is soft plastered, the plastering job had to be done every two years. He said with the hard plaster, this chore will be eliminated, but the total effect of the church will remain the same.

The NEWS also printed a photograph showing most of the mud plaster removed and a very distressed building exposed.[10]

After word had gotten about that the church was to be "hard plastered," a group known as "The Friends of Taos Valley" chaired by Genevieve Janssen, wrote a letter dated February 3, 1967, to Archbishop Davis requesting a meeting to discuss the problem. The Archbishop asked the architect to reply to the letter.[11]

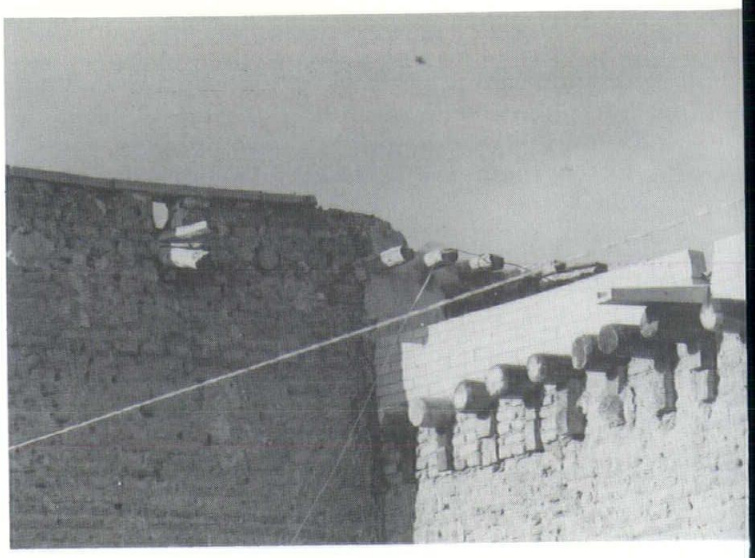
A letter was sent to the Archbishop on the 6th by Mrs. Sammy Heaston, concerning the establishment of a "Perpetual Maintenance Fund" for the church in the amount of $55,000 to $65,000 from which the interest accrued would be used "in perpetuity for maintenace of this important historical landmark." She enclosed a list of pledges totalling $6,856.

In reply to an inquiry from Ms. Janssen, John Gaw Meem, Architect, in a letter dated February 8, told her about a chemical weather-proofing material he had used on his adobe stables with some success. He estimated the cost at fifty cents per square foot and expressed the hope that this material which "will not discolor the adobe (except for 2 or 3 weeks while it is drying), and will last a long time (possibly the life of the building)" could be used.[12]

On Thursday, the 9th, an article appeared in the TAOS NEWS which said that $6,800 had been pledged to the maintenance trust fund, but the final decision concerning the establishment of the fund lay with Archbishop Davis. It also stated that "an interested individual," Frederick Kackley, a student at the Wurlitzer Foundation, had contacted about 25 people in the area who indicated that they would help with the "mud work." According to Kackley, the controversy over the church had spread to neighboring states and the faculty and students of the University of Colorado would be interested in assisting with the work. He also sent a letter to Archbishop Davis as did several concerned organizations listed in the article.[13]

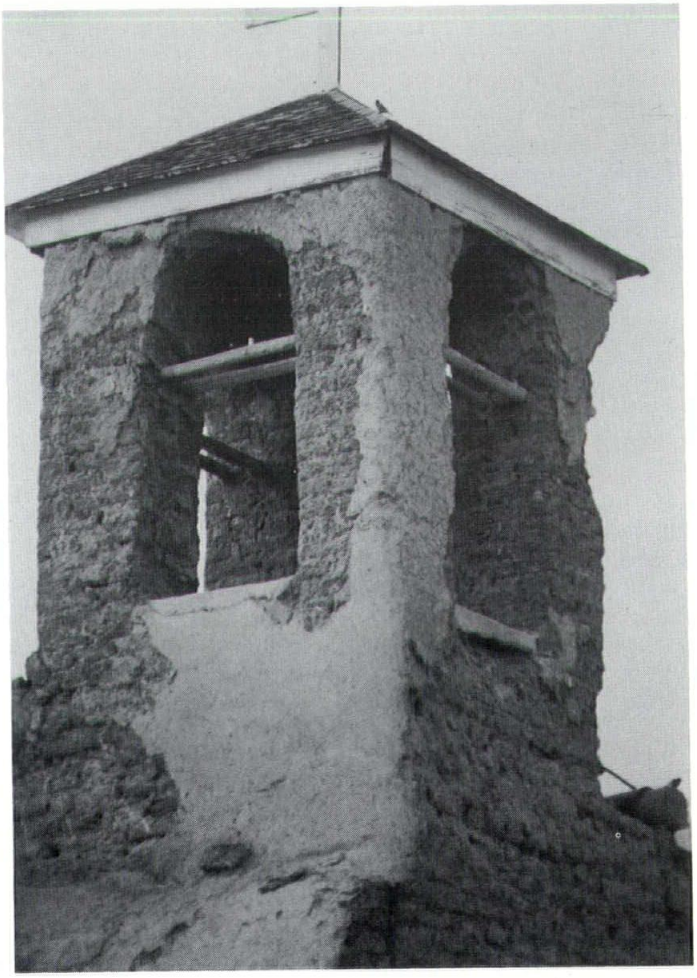
Mr. Wright replied to Ms. Janssen's earlier letter stating that any "soft plastering" that might be done would be contingent on making it as weather-proofed as possible. He said that samples of a proposed coating would be applied to the building in the near future.[14]

On February 13, Gus Fernandez, president of the parish council, wrote Archbishop Davis reiterating the council's decision at the meeting on the 10th, to proceed with the stucco work based on the architect's report in which he "advises that a coat of hard plaster over a well-secured mesh of wire would in effect lend the necessary protection and reinforce-



New pumice-concrete block replaces adobe bricks for parapets. A new canal *is in place. A 1967 photograph.*

A tower being stripped of old mud plaster. A 1967 photograph.



ment that would be found wanting should soft mud plaster be applied." The report doesn't state this exactly, but does say that a carefully applied stucco coating could be applied at no great loss to the overall form and appearance. Mr. Fernandez' letter says further that the council is "determined to proceed with the application of permanent hard plaster oblivious to the din and clambor (sic) raised by otherwise well-thinking persons."[15]

In the meantime, Kent Stout, an associate of George Wright, established contact with Orvil Johnson of Sacramento, California, formerly with the Division of Public Works, who then was president of an organization called "Our Heritage Restoration." Mr. Johnson recommended the use of "Acryl 60" or other similar acrylic material mixed with the adobe soil to create a stabilized adobe mix which could be used as plaster. The formula called for 1 part cement to 8 to 10 parts of soil containing about 20% sand by volume, 1 part of Acryl-60 to 3 parts water, with mineral oxide for color and straw binder added as desired. Water with Acryl-60 should be added to the dry mix until the mud will "just-ball" in the hand, according to him. He was of the opinion that this plaster should last from 50 to 100 years.[16] Because of the time pressure and our inability to confirm the successful use of this mixture, the recommendation could not be given the consideration it probably deserved.

The news about this controversy finally filtered down to Albuquerque and on February 23rd, the ALBUQUERQUE TRIBUNE carried a brief story under the headline: "Stucco on Taos Church? 'It's Sacrilegious'". They quoted the Friends of Taos Valley as saying, "It should be hand coated with soft adobe mud as it has been for centuries—anything else would be sacrilegious." They were also quoted as saying that replacing the vigas and parapet was sacrilegious.[17]

The TAOS NEWS also carried a story on February 23rd which stated that Nathaniel Owings, Architect, had pledged $1,000 to "soft plaster" the church "possibly using Pencapsula," a chemical stabilizer developed by Texas Refinery Corporation and used by the National Park Service.[18]

In the meantime, work on the interior of the church was proceeding. The new heating system was being installed. Electric wiring was being recessed in the walls. The walls were being plastered, and *canales* and splash blocks were installed on the roof. A very attractive wood moulding was uncovered on the right side of the nave when the old plaster was removed. It was left exposed when the new plaster was applied. Another interesting find was the skeletal remains of infants who had been buried in the walls of the north belfry. The remains were buried in the church yard.

Meem met with Archbishop Davis about this time,

Saint Francis of Assisi in a recent photograph. Cracks are appearing again. On close examination of the church patches seem as adobe-colored bandaides against the constant attacks of weather and time.

early March, and as a result, the Archbishop agreed that if a Society for the Preservation of New Mexico Mission Churches (similar to the organization of the 1920's) were established, he would welcome its help. He also said he would consider "Pencapsula" if recommended by the project architect and contractor. Almost everyone involved with the church stopped by to see the Meem stables where "Pencapsula" had been used, including Fr. Alvarez, Msgr. Reinberg, Gianardi, Wright and me.[19]

On March 13, John Meem wrote a letter to George Wright giving him corrected specifications for "Pencapsula" and a revised cost per square foot. In the letter he offered to send Fr. Alvarez $1,000 to help meet the cost because he felt its use would set a precedent for the survival of adobe construction.[19]

In March, it was decided to go ahead with the hard plaster despite the request of the architects to give the preservative a trial. Meem, who was visiting in California, sent a telegram to the Archbishop requesting that a final decision be delayed until his return to New Mexico. However, according to Msgr. Reinberg, the wire arrived too late. The Archbishop had decided to proceed with the hard plaster primarily because the use of "Pencapsula" was still experimental and might not solve the problem.[20]

After that, everything was rather anticlimatic. Work proceeded to completion and nothing much more was said by anyone until August 13, 1967, when an article by Vee Busch appeared in the EL PASO TIMES "SUNDIAL", headlined "Hard Plastering Marks End of Era in Traditional Adobe Architecture." It told the story accurately and summarized: "The essential lines of the architecture have been preserved and the church has been saved from total decay. But to the adobe *afficianado*, it will never be the same."[20]

And it isn't the same. On one of my trips to Taos a year or so later, I stopped by the church and examined the "hard plaster." There were cracks all over the building and the walls of the *camposanto*. In 1974, I noted that the "hard plaster" had been patched and covered with a coating, probably acrylic. It would be interesting to compare the cost of applying the "hard plaster" and then later repairing it with the application of mud plaster every two years. But this cannot be done accurately. One can only surmise.

In the meantime, the National Park Service has recommended against the use of chemical stabilizers because of some deleterious action observed at some of their projects.

In a letter written to me August, 1974, George Wright, now Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Texas, Arlington, made the following comments: "Looking back on the project, I must say that it was interesting, but I regret that it wasn't handled in a more sympathetic manner. Granted an emergency existed, the roof was in danger of collapsing, still, more time should have been taken to bring in archaeologists to survey the building, weigh the proposals for restoration and consider the offers to raise money from private sources."[21]

Many other repairs were made to the church which were not so controversial as the plastering. Besides the new roof structure already mentioned, new entrance doors were built to resemble the old doors as much as possible; new confessionals, a complete heating system, and a lighting system were installed. The electrical wiring was almost completely redone and was recessed in the walls. A new balcony floor and stair were built. The entire inside of the building was replastered and painted.

In preparing this article I have assembled much material on the church, including drawings, photographs, and written material. This will all be placed in the John Meem Room in the main library at the University of New Mexico for future use by architects and historians. It would be a good thing if all architects who work on historical buildings would place their documents in a library so that the records will be preserved. VDH

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cont. from page 9

gimes of maintenance, house-keeping and repair. In the western world, at least, a cosmetic effect of wealth, affluence, good repair if not shiny newness would have been the criterion of the owners. And, however fond one may have been of the Louvre when it was still a sooty blue-gray in color, one can rest assured that neither Francis I nor his architect Pierre Lescot visualized the Pavillon de l'horloge as looking that way. Not only was the Louvre largely built out of a tawny pink stone. Much of its architectural ornamentation was conceived of in that value and chroma, as is apparent today, now that the stone has been cleaned. Thus, we might say that when monumental, upper class architecture must be restored, the cosmetic criteria should be those of the creators—i.e., newness, brightness (of polychromy and gilt) and good housekeeping.

2. The reverse probably applies to most vernacular, peasant or primitive construction. Although all buildings were at one time new and bright, and the builders probably proud of them in that state, it is doubtful that there was any conscious standards of keeping them that way. (Painted woodwork for example, would have been an unheard-of luxury for even prosperous farmers until the last century or so.) Weathered shingles, mossy stones, patched fences and sagging gates would have been standard cosmetic conditions; only the village church might have been periodically painted or whitewashed, its cross or weathervane gilded. In the landscape there would have been no concept of the barbered lawns, clipped hedges, and pleached alleys of urbane upper class architecture and townscapes. The esthetic criteria of the restorationist of folk and vernacular buildings should reflect this condition. (Contrast, for example, the new maintenance standards adopted at Plimoth Plantation with those in force at Colonial Williamsburg.)

3. For ruins, e.g., abandoned forts, castles, prehistoric sites, etc.) entirely different esthetic criteria would apply. The stabilization of above-grade remnants and their maintenance across time would determine basic policy. In cold/wet climates, protective measures against moisture, freeze-thaw cycles would be mandatory (e.g., Fountains Abbey in England.) In hot, humid climates, radical control of vegetation would be mandatory, irrespective of what the original landscape designs might have been (e.g., Mayan ruins in Yucatan and Guatemala.)

Reconstruction and Replication: Uses and Mis-uses

Replicas and reproductions have always been troublesome for archaeologists, curators and collectors: and for obvious reasons, since even the well-intentioned replica (i.e., one not intended to be sold as an original) has a disconcerting tendency of turning up sooner or later, on the antiquities market. Deliberate fakes such as the "Etruscan" warrior, which bedevilled the curators of the Metropolitan Museum of Arts for decades before it was finally exposed as fraudulent, can cause no end of worry and expense. Hence most museums and galleries do their best to weed out copies and replicas (unless of course the replica is itself an antique, as in the case of Roman copies of Greek sculptures). Thanks to the growth of international expertise and scholarship in works of art, the circulation of fakes is increasingly restricted.

Of course there are broad cultural reasons why museums do not want to exhibit copies and replicas alongside of originals. One of the museum's function is didactic—i.e., to teach us how to discriminate between the real and the fake, how to appreciate the unique and ultimately irreproducible qualities of the original. This education takes place at two levels, reflecting the way in which our value judgements are developed. One level is subjective, the sheer sensual stimulation we get from seeing and feeling the artifact: the other is more objective, reflecting our knowledge of how our culture evaluates the beauty, uniqueness and monetary value of that artifact. The two are umbillically connected and interact to determine our final esthetic estimate of the object. (Thus if we *know* that the painting is a Rembrandt our judgement will be high: if we are told by an authority that it is a fake, our judgement drops precipitously.)

The same value-making process applies to larger artifacts like towns and buildings. The past century has taught us that reconstructions and reproductions of vanished buildings are culturally hazardous. There is a growing recognition of the fact that, in the last analysis, it is all but impossible to produce permanently convincing fakes. Time has its own merciless way of exposing them. Viollet-le-Duc was the best educated and most talented restorationist of the Nineteenth Century. The architectural "in-fill" he inserted into the semi-ruined fabrics of Carcassonne and the Chateau of Pierrefonds must have seemed to him and his contemporaries as thoroughly convincing. Yet today they appear almost comically Victorian. Each epoch leaves its own imprint upon everything it makes, including its version of its own past.

Nevertheless, there are today many situations in which the reconstruction or replica can be used as a surrogate for the missing original. These situations can be described as lying along a sort of scale of descending urgency.

1. A reconstruction of a vanished building may be justified for urbanistic or ambiental reasons, as where it played a vital role in some monumental composition. This was the justification for the reconstruction of the long-vanished Governor's Palace and Capitol in Williamsburg. These two monumental structures were conceived of as termini for two of the three main axes of the town: the surviving building for William and Mary College being the third. In formulating policies for the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg, it was agreed that the *raison d'etre* of the

town plan would be unintelligible to the visitor unless these two buldings were reconstructed. (Unfortunately, the validity of this argument has been somewhat weakened by the reconstruction of other buildings which played no such decisive role in the townscape). In the case of both Palace and Capitol one dealt with lost structures of which only one item of pictorial evidence was ever found — the so-called *Bodleian Plate* which showed, in naive perspective, the exteriors of all three buildings. There were voluminous documentary materials; and very complete archaeological examination of both sites were carried out. On the basis of such evidence, reconstruction drawings were prepared. This inevitably meant that the architects had to make highly conjectural reconstructions, especially for the interiors for which no visual documentation existed.

A similar case can be made for the recently completed reconstruction of the Royal Palace at Warsaw. Forming one entire side of an important square in the Stare Miastro, the palace had been almost completely leveled by the Nazis in World War II. Whether or not to reconstruct it had been debated for years, largely on ideological grounds. (This despite the fact that dozens of other palaces elsewhere had been completely restored.) Finally it was decided that reconstruction was desirable. Unlike Williamsburg, the Poles dealt with a monument which most Warsavians over forty would have known and one for which elaborate documentation-literary, photographs and measured drawings—existed. The reconstruction thus required a minimum of conjectural restoration.

2. There are historical personages and events which might be so important to their nation as to justify the reconstruction of buildings in which they took place, even though the building itself might long ago have disappeared. Three characteristic examples would be the Church of Jan Huss in Prague, and the Benjamin Franklin Homesite in Philadelphia. In the case of the Prague church, in which Huss had preached some of his most important sermons, it was decided to reconstruct completely the two-aisled Gothic chapel in which they occurred. Extensive historical and pictorial documentation existed. The site was cleared of later buildings, archaeology completed and the reconstruction drawings prepared. The reconstructed church now serves as a museum.

Originally, the same process had been contemplated for the Franklin Homesite. Fortunately, this approach was abandoned, largely because the most intensive research had failed to turn up any visual materials showing how the building might have looked in Franklin's day. It was decided after a complete archaeological investigation of the site, that the subsurface cellars would be consolidated and roofed over to serve as a subterrannean exhibit space. Above grade, and based on the foundations, would be erected a three-dimensional metal skeleton which would trace out the conjectural outlines of the roof, chimnies and walls of the original building.

This same technique had been employed by the Italians some years previously at an archaeological site at Piazza Armerina in Sicily. Here the super-structure, an aluminum skeleton sheathed with transparent plastic, replicated the conjectural masses of a great Roman villa. The main purpose of the shelter was to protect a series of extremely important mosaic floors. Unfortunately, two unexpected problems have somewhat reduced its effectiveness: the soft plastic, easily abraded by blowing sand, is becoming increasingly opaque; and the greenhouse effect of the translucent roofs produces uncomfortably high temperatures inside the enclosure.

3. At a smaller scale, it may often be necessary to reproduce missing elements *within* a given building which has been mutilated by fire, neglect or remodelling. This is especially the case in buildings with formal pretensions whose serial patterns (windows, dormers, chimnies, collonades) are so disrupted as to make comprehension difficult or impossible. This type of replication of parts has been employed in two American projects: the restoration of the Greek Revival commercial blocks on either side of Boston's Quincy Market; and the adaptive use of a comparable commercial block, Schermerhorn Row in New York. Both are rare examples of Nineteenth Century large-scale developments and their uniqueness as historical examples of this period outweighs the esthetic value of subsequent alterations. The decision to restore their original visual unity must be accepted as correct.

At a still smaller scale, there is the problem of missing elements in a decorative feature (column missing from a portico, bracket or coffer lost from a cornice). Such voids must be in-filled with replicas. For future curators, such replicas ought to be marked in a permanent way — e.g., by punched or branded dates or even by being executed in new material such as molded fibreglass.

4. Replicas of still-extant artifacts are being used in another set of circumstances—i.e., where the original is too valuable or too fragile to be allowed to remain *in situ*, either because of environmental attrition or the wear and tear of public exposure. Such measures have already been taken in Florence, where Michaelangelo's *David* has been moved from its original position in front of Palazzo Vechio to the controlled environment of the Academia dell'Arte. It has been replaced in the Piazza with an exact replica in the same marble. Similar steps had to be taken with the rapidly deteriorating sculptures on the Bapistry at Pisa: the originals have been moved into the local museum and replicas now act as surrogates around the cornice of the Bapistry.

5. In institutions where the emphasis is upon process, working models and demonstration (as opposed to static display), replicas of original mills, machinery, tools and equipment are increasingly employed. We have already seen, for example, that Plimoth Plantation is wholly a replica, a conjectural reconstruction of a vanished community not even located on its original site. But replicas are also exclusive-

ly employed *inside* Plimoth buildings These are all as close an approximation of the prototypes as modern research and scholarship can make them. They are all new: what is more important, they all *look* new. The importance of this aspect of verisimilitude is just beginning to be appreciated in American open air museums and historic houses. Conventionally, their grocery stores, apothecaries, warehouses and workshops are all carefully furnished or equipped with authentic antiques. The wide range of artifacts so displayed have been collected at great effort and expense. They are interesting historically, they are often handome and in today's inflationary market they are extremely valuable. In short, authentic museum-quality materials. But it is just beginning to be realized that no 1875 general store stocked century old containers of salt or tea; no apothecary stocked century old bottles of patent medicine; no warehouse was full of antique casks, barrels and hampers of material.

In recognition of this obvious fact, some institutions are now furnishing their shops and stores with brand new, bright and shiny replicas of such old merchandise. This policy has been followed in a recently restored general store in Sturbridge Village; and restored customs houses in Salem, Mass. and Monterey, Calif., are similarly stocked with the sort of new freight which one would have seen when clipper ships were still plying the seas. Among other unexpected advantages of such a policy are greatly simplified security and housekeeping problems. Plimoth Plantation has found very low rates of theft of replicas whereas traditional exhibits report high and rising thefts of antiques. Moreover, the use of replicas permits visitors to touch and handle them. (At Plimoth Plantation, for example, the visitor who has never had the experience can lie down on the rope-strung beds with their corn husk mattresses and homespun sheets "to feel what it was like.")

Finally, in instances where it is desired to demonstrate crafts and manufacturing processes of unique interest, it might be advisable to build a full-scale model. This has been done in Saugus, Mass., at the 17th century water-powered iron works, the nation's earliest mill of its type.

6. Where the use of reconstructions or replicas seems least justified is in situations in which they are not really essential to the esthetic enjoyment or intellectual comprehension of the architectural complex to which they belong. Four projects of this type —all of them American—can be cited as examples of this type of misdirected expertise: the reconstructed Stoa of Attalus in Athens; the full-scale replica of the Parthenon in Nashville, Tenn.; the Electra Havemeyer Webb Memorial Building at Shelburne Village, Vermont; and the J. Paul Getty Museum of Art in Malibu, California. All four must be reckoned as culturally counter-productive.

The Stoa, for all its immaculate research and execution in white marble, makes the excavated ruins of the Athenian Agora look shabby, neglected and second-hand. The magnificent collection housed in the new Stoa would have been better housed in a more discreet and frankly contemporary museum building. Such a new building should not be visually obtrusive in the Agora—it could be further back from the site or screened with heavy planting or, even better, be located under ground.

The "world's only full-scale, full-colored replica of the Parthenon" was built in Nashville as part of the 1895 Centennial Exposition. Originally fabricated of plaster and lath on a light metal armature, it was completely reconstituted as a reinforced concrete structure in the early 1930's. The initial motivation was literary and associative, not historical: with its many colleges and universities, Nashville called itself "the Athens of the South." Today, this preposterous old fake has acquired a certain historicity of its own but it is hard to imagine a situation in which such a transplanted replica would be built again.

The Webb Memorial Building is a yet more exotic concoction. Externally, it is designed to resemble a handsome Greek Revival country house of which Ms. Webb had been very fond but which she had never been able to buy for her outdoor museum. It looks like its wooden prototype; but for fireproofness, it is built of reinforced concrete. In plan, it bears no relation to the original house, being instead compartmentalized into rooms sized and proportioned to accept a series of fine French *boiserie* from the Webb's New York town house. (The panelling had, in turn, been earlier stripped from 18th century houses in France). In these rooms are displayed a fine group of French paintings collected by Ms. Webb during her long and remarkable life as a collector and connoiseur. Although such a collection certainly merits its own museum, it is impossible to conceive of a container less suited stylistically or a context less appropriate than Shelburne Village itself, which houses one of the country's greatest collections of American folk art, handicraft, and vernacular architecture. If the function of a museum is to raise the level of taste and comprehension of its visitors, the Webb Memorial must be rated as a failed tour de force. The most recent American replica of an architectural monument from the long ago and far away is the recent building for the Getty Museum in Malibu. A costly and carefully researched replica of the Herculaneum place, *Villa Suburbana dei Papiri.*

To be continued
in the
November/December
issue

FUN AND PROFIT

—continued from page 7

up both days, is to be the biggest and best ever assembled in New Mexico.

The Annual Awards Banquet will be the concluding event, with presentation of the NMSA Honor Awards, New Mexico Arts Commission Awards, Art by Architects prizes, Recognition of the Construction Industry, and the Medallion d'Oro of the NMSA. In accordance with this year's theme of public outreach and community contact, the three-member jury for the Honor Awards, Arts Commission Awards, and Art by Architects will include two distinguished members from other fields: Mrs. Clara Apodaca, wife of New Mexico Governor Jerry Apodaca and well known for her interest in the arts; and Albuquerque educator and businessman Dr. Joseph Zanetti. The third juror will be Otto Poticha, AIA, of Unthank Seder Poticha Architects of Eugene, Oregon, and president-elect of the Oregon Council of Architects. Entry forms for the Art by Architects and N.M.S.A. Honor Awards have been printed in the August issue of the Society Newsletter.

The newly-instituted Medallion d'Oro of the NMSA, which is to be given only in years when nominees are judged to be of sufficient stature, will recognize persons who have made a significant contribution to the physical environment of the state of New Mexico over a period of years. The jury for this award is made up of the presidents of the three New Mexico Chapters AIA, and the president of the State Society.

The theme of public awareness of and contact with the profession will be continued during New Mexico Architecture Week, October 16-24, opening with public tours of architects' homes on the 16th. During the entire week, architects throughout the state will host open-houses in their offices.

Under the leadership of Lenore Mastin (Mrs. Loren), wives of New Mexico architects are organizing as the Women's Architectural League, and will be the hostesses for the home tours planned for October 16. Other wives' activities are also planned for the convention. Wives of architects should contact Lenore Mastin at 881-7958 or 6500 Ponderosa, N.E., Albuquerque 87110.

For further information contact:

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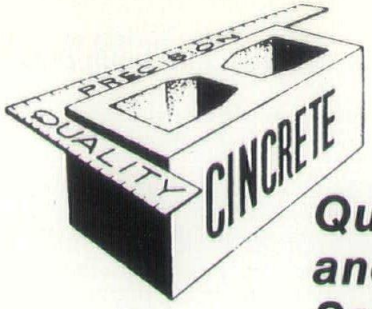

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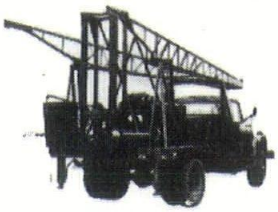

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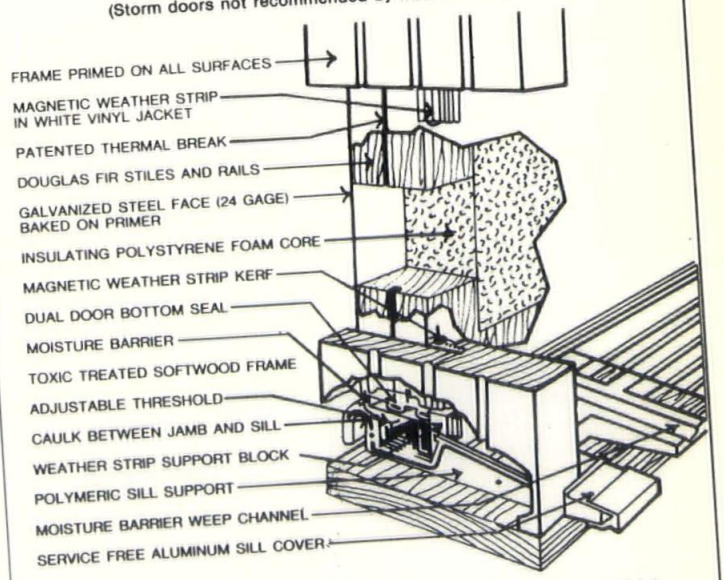

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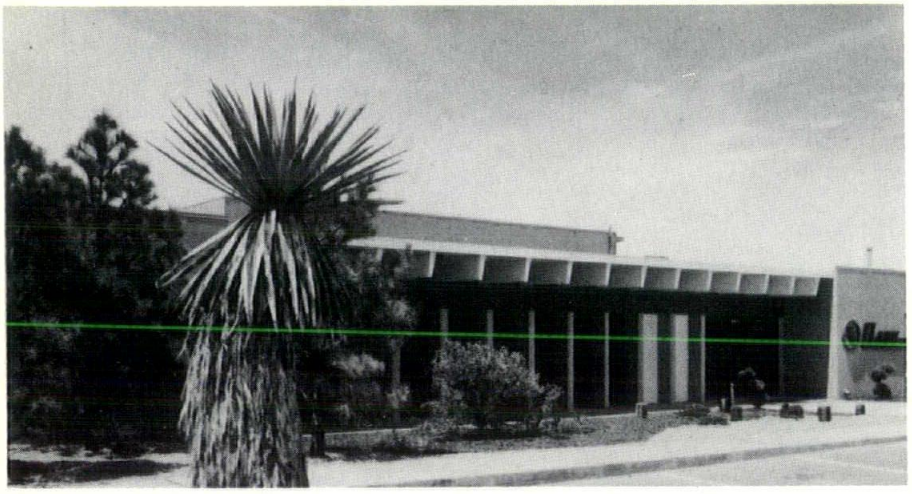

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